DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 908 PS 029 204

AUTHOR Vandenbroeck, Michel
TITLE Self-Awareness, Cultural Identity and Connectedness: Three Terms To (Re)Define in Anti-Bias Work.
PUB DATE 2000-08-00
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the European Conference on Quality in Early Childhood Education (EECERA) Conference (10th, London, England, August 29-September 1, 2000).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Education; Cultural Influences; Cultural Pluralism; Definitions; Developmental Psychology; *Early Childhood Education; *Ethnicity; Multicultural Education; Self Concept; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Antibias Practices; *Identity Formation

ABSTRACT

Building a strong but flexible identity and learning to deal with diversity are two main educational goals for early childhood education. Because identity is replacing the older concept of race and is serving as the basis for a new form of segregation, it is necessary to redefine the terms "identity" and "cultural identity." Identity involves processes in continual flux, resulting in images of identity at a particular moment. Many children are able to deal with various identities, each with its own value system and own language. It is a mistake to confine identity to membership in a number of subcultures; rather, personal, communal, and universal elements fuse to form a unique identity. The concept of identity becomes dangerous when groups place one part of their identify so high in a hierarchy that other aspects are neglected. The Eriksonian concept of identity needs to be adapted to current society to help children build a personal, multiple self-image and sense of belonging to multiple groups. Early childhood educators can help children negotiate between different reference groups, because child care settings are where children are confronted--probably for the first time--with society's diversity and complexity. The development of prejudice is also crucial to identity development. Although adults find it difficult to identify prejudice in young children, it is at this age that prejudice should be addressed. An active pedagogy on how to deal with diversity in the group is necessary to fulfill the socializing function of public early childhood education. By discussing forms of diversity, children gradually learn that people can have different views and still understand each other. (Contains 15 references.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 449 908

Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training

ACEPP • EYTARN • KCCN • MUTANT • PAVEE POINT • SCHEDIA • VBJK

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Self-awareness, cultural identity and connectedness: three terms to (re)define in anti-bias work

Paper presented at the EECERA Conference on Diversity, Complexity and Multiple Perspectives, Institute of Education, London, 2000.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Vandenbroeck

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Michel Vandenbroeck
Resource and Training Centre for Child Care, VBJK-University of Gent,
Bellevue 22, B-9050 Gent, Belgium. E-mail: *michel.vandenbroeck@rug.ac.be*

A beetle saw her children on the wall and said "they look like a necklace of pearls." This is an Egyptian saying. Every parent, every educator, wants his or her children to grow up to be happy, self-aware people. We all want our children to feel good about themselves, to have the feeling that they are welcome just as they are, with their own individual characters. We want to see the *contentment* shining in their eyes. But how can we do that in this fragmented world, where so many young people have trouble answering the simple but existential questions: 'who am I and where do I belong?' From the many talks I have had with parents, it appears that these themes are, today, a source of deep concern, and confusion to them, as well.

Looking back over the last fifty years and seeing a long series of ethnical and cultural conflicts, we realise that we have not done such a wonderful educating job. Of course, we have an excuse: the world has changed drastically and we are hardly prepared for life in this new world. We, adults, were raised with a simple and static view of the world that did not prepare us to deal with all these changes. That excuse is no longer applicable for the educator of today. The future is made today, by raising the adults of tomorrow.

Educate for what kind of world? How will the world of tomorrow look like. We sure do not know this. But some things we do know about het future living environment: it will be extremely complex, heterogenous and diverse. Thus we will have to prepare children to complexity, to rapid changes and to diversity. Never before it has been so obvious that building a strong but flexible identity and learning to deal with diversity are two main educational goals for ECE.

Identity is a key concept. We can not discuss either education or how to deal with diversity without talking about identity. That is a fact that all authors agree with. Sometimes this concept is preceded by an adjective, such as national, cultural, ethnic, etc. These concepts also come up often in the Treaty for the Rights of the Child and in the goals of the European Child-Care Network. It is, however, a controversial concept, that is used both by 'progressives'(meaning "we ought to show respect for the cultural identity of immigrants", for example .) and by "conservatives", who use the concept as a new type of racial classification. What comes to mind, for example, is the interpretation that nationalistic Serbs, members of the Bozkurt (Turkish Grey Wolves) or organisations on the far right (such as the Front National in France or the Vlaams Blok – an extreme right-wing nationalistic party -- in Belgium) give to their own cultural identity. In their jargon, cultural identity is something that has to do with tradition and individual character traits that must, under all conditions, be defended against influences from other groups. Or it s used in the sence that the cultural identities of indigenous (majority) groups can not coexist with islamic cultural identities. The concept of cultural identity replaces, as it were, the older concept of 'race' and serves as the basis for a new form of segregation. The ideology of the purity of one's own identity has replaced the old ideology of the purity of the race. That is why it is necessary to delve deeply into this concept; so that there can be no misunderstanding about what it is we mean when we use the terms 'identity' and 'cultural identity.'

PS 029204

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A significant misunderstanding could arise if we were to characterise 'identity' as something that is clearly delineated; complete and constant over time. Upon further reflection, we realise that this is not only an untrue, but also a dangerous assumption. The static, essentialistic concept of identity is a relic of a society our grandparents lived in: a homogenous society (or a society that consisted of homogeous "islands") where the belonging to one particular group defined the whole self image: the school one went to, the religion one had, the socio-economic group one belonged to, even the kind of partner one would mary. The good thing about these good old days is that they will not return. Today we live in a complex world where every individual, from birth on belongs to many different reference groups with each their own cultures, norms, believes, habits, values, etc.

Pinxten and Verstraete therefore oppose what they call an "essentialistic" description of communal identity, oppose pronouncements such as "typically Flemish or Dutch characteristics, the Islamic character or the Western-Christian identity." According to them, it is better to use the term: the dynamics of identity, processes that are in a continual state of flux and result in images of identity at one particular moment (Pinxten & Verstraete, 1998). This modern-day vision of identity and origin has the support of many scientists from various disciplines. According to the Dutch educator, Frieda Heyting it is determining for child-rearing that, in modern society, people more often belong to a number of groups. Because of the globalisation of the world, the increased mobility and the fast exchange of information, we come in contact with an abundance of models and, therefore, also with an abundance of ways in which to define ourselves. The idea has disappeared that there is one authentic 'self' characterised by stable, distinguishable and recognisable characteristics, according to Heyting. She now uses the term *multifrenia*. (Heyting, 1999).

Many children appear, for example, to be able to deal with various "identities", each with its own value system and even its own language. That is the conclusion of Ruth Soenen and others in an anthropological study of children of Moroccan origin in Flanders. She determined that the children have an arsenal at their disposal of three different ways of interacting: child-interaction, which determines how they interact with parents and family members (and that expresses itself in a certain language – for example, Arabic – a certain religion, etc.); student-interaction, which determines how they interact with their teachers (characterised by a calm and quiet attitude) and youth-interaction, which they use to interact with their peers and which is characterised by a different vocabulary and different 'codes'. Most of the children appear to be able to combine these different 'identities' seamlessly, as is described in the following episode by Soenen: *"When I was on the way home from the supermarket last Wednesday, I saw Malika, my young Moroccan neighbour, in the distance. She was wearing a headscarf and still had her blue school uniform on. When we passed each other, she put her hand up in the air and yelled: "give me the five!." I gave her "the five" and asked her where she was going. She was going to Arabic class. She went on her way in her blue school uniform, adorned with a headscarf and singing the popular song: "Héé macarena!"* (Soenen, R. In: Pinxten & Verstraete, 1998).

Multiple identity

An interesting work (though not academic) on this new concept of multiple identity was written by Amin Maalouf. Maalouf suggests that it is, indeed, of utmost importance to continue to emphasise the complexity of identity because one is still wrongly inclined to express identity in such sentences as "I am Flemish", "I am Belgian", "I am black", "I am a Muslim", or "I am Serb". He who indicates that he belongs to several communities is sometimes accused of hiding his roots in an indefinable mush in which all colours disappear. Nevertheless, we all do belong to many communities and everyone's identity is made up of a whole spectrum of elements that extends much further than what is officially registered on our identity cards. Most of us belong to a religious or a free-thinking tradition, to a nationality (sometimes more than one), to an ethnic or linguistic group, to a (more or less extended) family, to a professional group or a group that has had the same education, to an organisation and to a certain social milieu. Even this is only a limited list. People can feel more or less connected to a province, a city or a district, a clan, a sport club, a group of colleagues, a group of friends, a labour union, a company, a political party, an organisation or a club, a group of people who have the same hobbies or the same sexual preferences, a group with the same physical handicap, etc. etc.

Our identity is the unique fusion of these and many more elements. It is a cocktail that is different for each individual and is in a continuous state of change. It would, for that matter, be a mistake to confine identity to membership in a number of subcultures.

In the words of the French ethnopsychologist, Jean Biarnès the human subject builds an identity which refers both to the symbolic connection he has with the groups he belongs to and to the unique, personal element which is a function of his personal history, the course of his life. He adds that it is the difficult—but important – task of those who raise children to be able to differentiate continually between this 'cultural' and 'personal' aspect. Indeed, he indicates that, alongside of this cultural and personal aspect, there are also universal aspects: elements of identity that apply to everyone. If this were not the case, each individual would only consist of personal elements and elements belonging to his own groups, separate from each other, as unconnected stones in a disconnected mosaic. Above all the individual and cultural differences, there are the universal models of the human mind that make it possible for us to understand one another. One of the essential universal human "values" (which Maalouf also describes as such) is the integrity of the individual. (Biarnès, 1999).

Among all these—personal, communal and universal – elements which make up identity, there is a certain hierarchy. We consider, for example, one element to be more important than another. Thus, for one person, the social milieu he or she belongs to is much more important than his or her nationality while, for someone else, exactly the opposite holds true. Over time, the hierarchy changes. Maalouf uses the example here of the homosexual Italian during the fascist regime. The homosexual aspect of his personal identity will undoubtedly have been important, but no more than, say, his profession, his political preferences or his religion. Suddenly, he is confronted with repression from the State: he is threatened with humiliation, deportation and torture. This man who was, perhaps previously, a nationalist and a patriot will, from then on, possibly no longer be able to enjoy the parade of uniformed soldiers through his street. He might even wish for their defeat in battle. Because of the persecution, his sexual orientation has become so important that it even displaces the patriotic portion of his identity. Often, one's stated identity is used to set someone apart from the so-called adversaries (Maalouf, 1998).

Dangerous identities

The concept of identity becomes dangerous when groups place one part of their identity so high in the hierarchy that all other aspects (among which, the personal and the universal) are – forced to be – neglected. It is that mechanism of rigidity and association of the identity that makes it possible for a Serb to loose the ability to find any areas of similarity with his Croatian or Kosovarian acquaintances or that a Turkish Belgian cannot share common interests with, say, his Belgian or Curd neighbours. It is that rigidity that no longer allows a critical attitude towards those who belong to the same group, that Maalouf calls "identités meurtrières" (murderous identities). Nationalism is only one example of such a union that reduces the individual to his national (or, in Flanders, his linguistic) identity. Isn't it true that the primary virtue of every kind of nationalism is that, for every problem, a scapegoat is found before a solution.

Constricting someone's identity to, for example, his ethnic identity is just as arbitrary as limiting him to, say, his national or religious identity or – at the other extreme – only to talk about his individual identity and to pretend that the communal identities do not exist. What could, after all, be grounds for limiting the identity to solely the ethnic identity? That question was posed by the French-Dutch sociologist Verbunt (Verbunt, 1998). Could that be the blood connection and child-rearing by the community? In the beginning, there was only one's ethnic origins and nothing else, just as in religious fanaticism, the individual is rendered invalid in the presence of God and, in nationalism, the individual owes everything to the State (la nation). Ethnic, religious or nationalistic cleansing is based on views like these. No child assimilates only one culture, in order to simply reproduce it as an adult, as often used to be claimed by developmental psychology. Along with his socialisation, the child or the young person will find elements – within the same culture or elsewhere – which encourage him to take a critical stance towards certain customs, norms, institutions, symbols, languages, social relationships, etc. This makes him want to exist in his own right, instead of simply assuming the role that others have outlined for him. My identity, says Verbunt, what I am, is not determined by the fact that I belong to or am integrated into one single milieu. My identity is the personal manner in which I create a certain unity with this diversity. (Verbunt, 1999).

Many researchers as well as theoreticians have come, therefore, to the same conclusion: identity is not a static unit, but is something dynamic, multi-faceted and active It is never completed and is a personal

mixture of past and future, of fact and fiction, creatively rewritten into an (ever-changing) story. The element of the future plays an essential role and that is why we must be careful not to describe or name someone using a static concept of identity. By pegging someone by their origins, we treat identity and origin as if they are one and the same thing. That focuses the attention on the most static element of a person or a group, on that element that does not change. One then sees the person or the group as what it once was and not as what it is becoming (Laplantine, 1999)[1].

In conclusion we can say that the Ericksonian approach of identity devellopment needs to be adapted to todays society in order to formulate educational answers to this main question: how can we help children to build a personal, multiple self-image and a sence of belonging to a multitude of groups at the same time? It is obvious that the basis for this will be in early years. When Peter Pan asks Wendy to go back to Never Never Land with him, he gives as his reason that she could teach the Lost Children how to tell stories. "If they know how to tell them, the Lost Boys might be able to grow up," he says. This example comes from the work of Jerome Bruner. In his vision on how the education of today must prepare children for the twenty-first century, he also compares the development of the concept of self with the constructing and telling of one's own story. The *narrative*, he adds, is just as important for the cohesion of a culture as for the structuring of the individual. In present-day society, with all its changes and immigrations, creating a coherent self-descriptive story has certainly not become any easier (Bruner, 1996).

Post modern education

From a very early age, children are confronted with a multitude of models: a multitude of values, customs and habits. We can no longer impose simply one model. Obedience (and adopting and internalising the one model of the educator) used to be the primary virtue. In our society and in the twenty-first century, the primary virtue is no longer the docile "enculturation", it is adaptability: being able to adapt to diversity and change. It is, of course, still about teaching children to live within the rules that make existence in and of the community possible. These rules are, however, always the rules of a specific community and they are seldom universal. We do not live in one community with one set of rules, but in a wealth of communities with, therefore, a wealth of value systems and a wealth of customs and habits. With each of these communities, the individual maintains a relationship that must establish an equilibrium between the rights of the individual (those are the obligations of the community) and the rights of the community (those are the obligations of the individual). This equilibrium can be obtained by negotiation (Verbunt, 1999). Moreover, children join a group (often several groups) of peers at an ever younger age. They also have an enormous influence, their own "culture." Educators can help children to experience the negociation between different reference groups. Educators have this possibility exacly because they represent the first new milieu that a child experiences outside the home environment. Early childcare is the place where the child will be confronted (probably for the first time) with society's diversity and complexity.

The other

Having said this, immediately a second essential question arises: Up to what point can one be himself or herself and demand the right to be different, without lapsing into withdrawal and shutting others out?" Where is the boundary between a legitimate quest for a group one can belong to and the perfidious ascension of the rejection of others? It is this question that, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, is the basis of many of the conflicts in the world. (Khaznadar, 1999). Other authors have also indicated that this question is the most essential one. The Dutch sociologist, A. de Swaan, has formulated this so accurately and strikingly that he is to be quoted here in detail : "The *right question is, how can you be considerate of others without damaging your own values? That is the paramount question; that is what it is all about in the discussion between universality and relativism: how you can be considerate of other people and, at the same time,*

[1] The Italian researcher, Elisabetta Nigris, talks about, for example, "identità plurima dell'individuo" in order to express this complexity. The French anthropologist, François Laplantine, argues extensively in favour of simply forgetting the concept of identity completely. He lashes out at what he calls the "monolithic I" and states that, by pinning every individual down to his origins, we pin him down in the past, instead of giving him the space to become what he is to become (Laplantine, 1999). Still others speak of *hyphenated identities* (Swyngedouw & Phalet, 1999).

hold onto what is important for yourself. That is why you must never ask ethnic or nationalistic movements what it is they want to say, how great their red hats are, how nice their songs are or how extraordinary their history is. You must ask them only one question: how do you deal with others? For, in all that nationalism and all that ethnicity, there is often something nice, something protective and sweet: keeping the Fresian language alive, conserving the Surnames culture. However, in Eastern Europe this same ethnicity is murderous. There must be a difference, and that difference is incorporated into a question: you can be ethnic, you can be nationalistic, you can be God knows what, but you must answer one question: how do you want to relate to other people? (de Swaan in: Hoffman & Arts, 1994).

There is no lack of research concerning the development of prejudice in young and somewhat older children. Since Horowitz's research in 1936, a great deal of data has been collected on the subject, even though many questions have remained unanswered. Most of the research (and certainly the first batch) was carried out in the United States where the image that the black and white communities had about themselves and about each other was closely studied. The goal of this research was actually to discover how racism originated. A later group, the so-called "School of Bristol", also carried out research based on the same questions and the image that we have today on this subject is still largely determined by what has been published in a limited number of countries. These are the United States, Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) (Vinsonneau, 1996). The methodology used is also typical for this type of research. In 1947, for instance, Clark & Clark developed a questionnaire based on photographs of dolls with various skin colours. These pictures were shown to children with the question: which doll would they most like to play with? Later, in 1975, Williams, Bert & Boswell developed the PRAM (Pre-school Racial Attitude Measure), a measuring instrument to chart racial attitudes in young children. Just as with other tests from that period, they always worked with photos of girls and boys of various ethnic groups and the children were asked questions that were intended to indicate budding stereotypes. A typical question sounded like this: "A cat has fallen into the water but, luckily, it was saved. Which of these boys do you think saved it?" Most of these methods imply a forced choice: when the boy or girl chooses one picture as the 'good' one, it automatically means that the other pictures are 'bad'. Later on, the testing became more carefully shaded and allowed a more graded approach (Aboud, 1988; Vinsonneau, 1996). This type of research has – and right so – been heavily criticised. One significant portion of the criticism deals with the methodology. By showing children photos from which they must choose one in answer to the researcher's question, one assumes that the preference for one photo is equal to the rejection of the other which, of course, does not have to be the case. The material that was used is also a simplification of reality and too unilaterally geared towards skin colour as a meaningful differentiation between people, while no research had been done to determine whether or not the children themselves consider this to be a sufficiently relevant detail. In other words children's views on multiple identities were not taken into account.

In spite of all this criticism, more than 60 years of research has, nonetheless, led to a few important insights. We now know that four-year old children have an *ethnic awareness* or *cultural identity*: they are not only clearly conscious of the ethnic group they belong to (and of the existence of other ethnic groups) but they already attach a value judgement to it. White four-year olds have, in general, a more positive image of whites than of others. This is not necessarily the case for non-white children. Some of them consider whites (who, of course, belong to a different group than they do) to be 'better' than the group they themselves belong to, others are more inclined to choose those who look like them. Between four and seven years old, this view (prejudice) appears to become increasingly stronger. (Aboud, 1998).
During the last few years, an entire method of education without prejudice has been developed based on these and other pieces of research as well as, in particular, on the observations of those who work in education. This approach originated, for the most part, in the same countries that were actively involved in the research. One prominent example is the work of Louise Derman-Sparks (1989) in the United States and Ann Stonehouse (1991) in Australia. Their basic principle comes down to the following. Starting around the age of two, children begin to notice external variations. Differences in gender, skin colour and other externals are the first to be noticed. They notice differences in hair structure, in the form of the eyes, nose or mouth. Soon, the children also notice other differences, such as a different language, other eating habits, differences in dress, etc. (Derman-Sparks, 1989; King et al, 1994; Vandenbroeck, 1998). Still later, children begin to see differences in social classes and, at the same time, they are able to make more complex connections between these differences, such that it is not uncommon to hear a child -- by the end of elementary school – claim that black people are poor.

This is a point that arouses a good deal of resistance in practice. Adults often find it difficult to note such utterances in children. Children are innocent and cannot possibly have a racist attitude like this. It is the myth of the child as an angel that we all want to hold onto. That is why many adults deny the existence of prejudice in children, instead of recognising it (Yasmin Alibhai Brown, 1993). In practice, we certainly do notice that -- for children as young as two or three years old -- children or adults who are, in one way or another, "different" call up negative associations. Here are a few examples. The association between a dark skin colour and "dirty" or "grubby" is often noticeable at that age, such as with a child who refuses to take a black child's hand or to play with back dolls. We were able to observe the early association "different language = stupid" in a 2 ½ year-old girl who was passing out puzzles to her peers at the crèche and who gave a baby puzzle to a French-speaking girl "because she's not so good at it yet." The step from these early associations (also called *pre-prejudices*) to the first forms of discriminations is made quickly. We see that, for example, in the case of a group of four-year olds who do not want a black girl to play The Little Mermaid because the Mermaid has to be white (Derman-Sparks, L. in Vandenbroeck, 1998). Various authors are not always in agreement concerning the ages at which the various prejudices come to the surface. However, there is a large consensus that the toddler and pre-school ages are crucial. That is why there is a plea in favour of bringing children in these age groups in contact with diversity and also in actively teaching them to deal with it.

The origin of prejudice is a complex matter in which cognitive, emotional and social elements play their part. Therefore the Contact Hypothesis appears to be false, as is obvious through a lot of research. This hypotheses stated that if children are confronted with diversity at an early age, they will get used to this diversity and not produce prejudices. What is needed on top of the confrontation with diversity is an active pedagogy, an educational philosophy on how to deal with the diversity in the group. This is what we call the socialising function of public education in ECE.

This socialising function (and, therefore, also the responsibility) of day-care and elementary school has been extensively documented by the ACEPP in France (Combes, 1990; Mony, 1993; Julliard, 1998). The famous psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott, said that it is in the space between the inner and the outer world, that is also the space between people – the transitional space – that intimate relationships and creativity take place. In this way, the family day-care provider, the day-care centre or the school is, as it were, the first representation of society in all its diversity. It is for the child (and the parent) an experimental space, a first window to the world. In other words: if the day-care centre or the family day-care provider is successful in bringing the negotiations to a positive conclusion and in creating a new culture in the institution -- which takes all the various home cultures into account -- then it gives each child (as well as each parent) a preview of how society could be. It is also, at the same time, the children's' first model of how one can make a personal choice in the construction of his or her own identity. That is, alongside of the educational mission, the social mission of the educational institution. The essence of the function of the educational institution as *sas de transition* is that is can find the golden mean between the two extremes. The one extreme is formed by the school or educational institution that is solely interested in the socialisation, making the individual fit into the society by means of the transfer of knowledge and social control. That is the 'learning by rote' school of education which reduces the child to an object. The other extreme is the educational institution which solely sees the child as subject and no longer embodies any social norms and values (Bourdieu, 1993). In the first case (the learning-by-rote institution) we see a cold-hearted child-care institution: it leaves little room for the child's own rhythm, it offers standard solutions and describes the children as students (in terms of stages of development and averages). In the second case -- where the child is solely a subject – the educators have no basis for their institution and can themselves no longer be role models because they no longer embody their own set of values.

This is clearly no easy task for educators. Some crucial factors (such as social norms and inequalities) are not in their hands. They are moreover limited by their proper view (that is amongst others the product of their groups of references). We cannot, indeed, escape the mechanism (the influencing of our views by social structures), is Bruner's answer, but we certainly can try to become as conscious of it as possible. This means that we should try to obtain an insight into how – and why -- we think about others. That is the skill that, according to Bruner and others, is essential for raising and educating children for the twenty-first century. He describes this as *going meta*. The image that we gradually create of the other is coloured and limited by our own frame of reference (our own language, among other things) which we cannot escape. However, we also know that, as we make ourselves more conscious of this, we will become less subjected to

the patterns of our own symbolic system. *Going meta* means learning to think about thinking and there is no question that it must become the most essential principle for education.
Here is an example from our action-research to illustrate this.
In a Brussels' day-care centre, Karin (the teacher) brings out a bread basket with dozens of kinds of bread in it. Dyvia, a child of Indian origin, takes the chapati and tosses it back and forth between her hands, as is done when preparing chapatis. Elke, her neighbour, takes the chapati away from Dyvia and, with a brusque 'no', puts it back on the table. Dyvia takes the chapati again, repeats the action and, again, Elke takes the chapati away. This time, Elke looks at her angrily in order to make it clear to Dyvia that you don't play with bread like that. Karin then intervenes. She says to Elke: "You don't think that you can play with bread like that, do you?" You don't play with bread like that at home. What kind of bread do you usually eat at home?" Elke takes a roll. Karin continues: "At Dyvia's house they often eat this kind of bread. They are called chapatis and you make them like this. At your house, you don't do it like that, but at Dyvia's house that's normal." This anecdote was also the impetus for Karin to ask Dyvia's mother to come to school to make chapatis with the children, an activity which Elke also enjoyed. Karin's intervention is an example of "going meta": she did not reprimand Elke; she made her think about why she thought it was dirty to throw bread like that. By explicitly confronting her with the difference in customs at home, she showed Elke that other views exist and she also showed both Elke and Dyvia that this is good. In this concrete case, both Elke and Dyvia learn that the same principle (in this case, the principle of "good manners" or "politeness") can lead to opposing practices.

The pedagogic of reciprocity is, the recognition and acknowledgement of other views and beliefs, even though one does not have to agree with them. We must teach children that other views on recognisable arguments have a basis and that recognisable arguments can lead to opposing views (Bruner, 1998). This is one of the cornerstones in dealing with diversity in young children. It also immediately forms the condition and the basis for the negotiation among adults. That will be the theme of the second paper in this symposium, presented by Maryse Lejeune.
By often bringing up -- and discussing – forms of diversity, children gradually learn that there are different views on what is considered "polite", on what is considered "delicious", on what is "tough", etc. The learn that you can have different views and still understand each other. They also learn that different (opposing) views are still based on reasonable arguments and that is, according to Bruner, one of the most essential goals in education (Bruner, 1998). That means that, in practice, we will look for precisely those activities that emphasise the diversity which is present in order to stimulate "meta-thinking." That also means that we will look for and discuss the differences as well as the similarities in these activities. In this way, we can confront children with simple *antinomies*. Thinking is, after all, a kind of dialogue and it is good, every once in awhile, to let that internal dialogue be spoken out loud via such activities and via interactions with adults. It is, after all, essential that the child learns to verbalise his experiences and that the adults can help the child find the right words to fit these experiences. This is the only way that he or she can make these experiences truly his or hers. "What is not expressed through language, has no meaning," as the French psychoanalyst, Françoise Dolto so succinctly stated (Liaudet, 1998).

Educating children to complexity and diversity demands that we question basic terms such as identity and that education will include an anti-bias approach, not as a new standard, but as a basic quality issue. The devellopment of such an approach demands the deconstruction and reconstruction of fundamental terms in developmental psychology, as we have pointed out. It also demands more action research on a transnational level. The network Diversity in Early Childhood Education (DECET) aims to do so. This European network gathers trainers, researchers and practicioners around the theme of diversity in early childhood education and focuses on the training of educational staff. Through common projects and through their website they contribute to the dissemination of a pedagogic that respects the complexity of actual society. More information is to be found on the website http://www.decet.org.

References

Aboud, F. (1988). *Children and prejudice.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Alibhai-Brown, Y. (1999). La peur de l'autre. In: *Internationale de l'imaginaire. N°10. Nous et les autres. Les cultures contre le racisme. Pp 43-49.* Arles: Babel.
Biarnès, J. (1999). *Universalité, diversité, sujet dans l'espace pédagogique.* Paris: L'Harmatan.
Bourdieu, P. (1993) *La misère du monde.* Paris: Seuil.
Bruner, J. (1996) *The culture of education.* Nondon: Harvard University Press.
Heyting, F. (1999) Participatie en autonomie. In: Somers, A. *Kind in de eenentwintigste eeuw.* Gent: VBJK.
Hoffman, E. & Arts, W. (1994) *Interculturele gespreksvoering.* Houten-Zaventem: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum.
Khaznadar, C. (1999) J'aime le kh guttural. In: *Internationale de l'imaginaire. N°10. Nous et les autres. Les cultures contre le racisme. Pp 11-17.* Arles: Babel.
Laplantine, F. (1999) *Je, nous et les autres. Etre humain au-delà des appartenances.* Paris: Le Pommier.
Liaudet, J. (19980) *Dolto expliquée aux parents.* Montreal: l'Archipel.
Maalouf, A. (1998) *Les identitées meurtrières.* Paris: Bernard Grasset.
Pinxten, R. & Verstraete G. (1998) *Cultuur en macht. Over identiteit en conflict in een multiculturele wereld.* Antwerpen-Baarn: Houtekiet.
Swyngedouw, M.; Phalet, K. & Deschouwer, K. (1999) *Minderheden in Brussel. Sociopolitieke houdingen en gedragingen.* Brussel: VUBPress.
Verbunt, G. (1994) *Les obstacles culturels aux apprentissages.* Paris: CNDPT.
Verbunt, G. (1999) Culturele vooruitzichten voor de vorming van de identiteit en opvoeding. In: Somers, A. *Kind in de eenentwintigste eeuw.* Gent: VBJK.